



UNIT: DIFFICULT NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

LESSON 1 | VIRGIN BIRTH AND RESURRECTION

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That the Virgin Birth and Resurrection are key miracles, documented in Scripture, that are foundational to our faith and display God's power over life and death.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Understand why these two miracles are foundational in their Christian faith and help them see the importance of sharing the Gospel message that has been entrusted to believers.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Matthew 1:18-25, 28:1-10, Isaiah 7:10-14, Luke 1:26-37, Galatians 4:4-7, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, John 11:25-26.

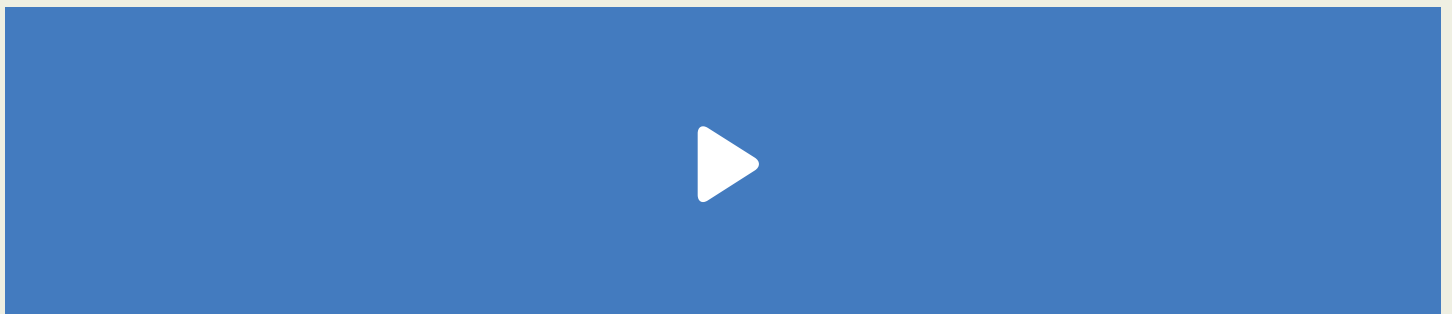
ANCHOR STATEMENT: Belief in the Virgin Birth and Resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the Christian Faith. Although equally impossible, we proclaim that God has made them possible!

OVERVIEW:

A miracle is defined as “a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency.” By that definition, a Virgin Birth and Resurrection are easily classified as miracles. However, these two key miracles concerning Jesus are often brought under heavy scrutiny. The enemy has mocked these miracles, calling believers crazy for their belief that God makes the impossible possible. Many have tried to ‘explain away’ the miraculous nature of these events and accused the witnesses of falsifying records. But the fact of the matter is that our faith that God can deliver us from sin and death rests on His ability to perform both of these miracles.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Anchored* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “CONTEXT”?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Matthew

- *Author:* Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

Isaiah

- *Author:* Isaiah, son of Amoz wrote the book of Isaiah.
- *Time frame:* The events of Isaiah occurred between 740 and 681 B.C., though some parts of the book would have been constructed at a later date.
- *Purpose:* The purpose of this book was to call the nation of Judah back to God, to warn of coming judgment, and to tell of God's ultimate salvation through the Messiah.

Galatians

- *Author:* Paul, the persecutor-of-Christians-turned-missionary, is the author of the Letter to the Galatians (see Acts 7:57-8:3 and 9:1-31). After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul set out on several journeys to proclaim the salvation that is available through Jesus and His death and resurrection. Several churches were planted as a result of Paul's leadership, including the church in Galatia.
- *Time frame:* Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians sometime between 48 and 53 AD, most likely by 49 AD.
- *Purpose:* The primary purpose of Paul's letter to the Galatians was to respond to a particular issue: a group of Jews—claiming to also be Christ-followers (many early Christians were Jewish Christians)—had begun to argue that Christians are not just saved by faith, but that they also were required to keep the Mosaic Law. This, of course, went against everything Paul knew to be true about Jesus. The main thrust of Paul's teaching was that there is no work we could accomplish to be saved (Ephesians 2:8), including the keeping of the Law (Galatians 2:16).

1 Corinthians

- *Author:* The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the Church in Corinth.
- *Time frame:* Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus in the spring, shortly before Pentecost. We are unsure of what year, but it was likely between 53 AD and 55 AD.
- *Purpose:* Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written to a divided church to call them to become united for the sake of the Gospel. He was calling the church to lay down the things that divided them in order to fully embrace the one thing that is strong enough to unite them: Christ crucified!

THE SETTING

Throughout the Old Testament, there were over 300 prophecies about a Savior who would come to cleanse God's people of their sin and defeat death for good. But then, for about 400 years, there was silence between the prophets and the coming of Jesus Christ. For 400 years, God's people held onto the hope of a Savior who would be the ultimate light in the dark of the world. This is the setting where Jesus enters the scene through the miracle of a virgin birth. Then, after the Savior (Jesus) had grown up, He was brutally tortured before being killed in one of the most painful, slow, and public death sentences of all time: being nailed and hung on the Cross. But then, much to the surprise of the world, Jesus arose from the dead three days later.

THE MAIN POINT

There are many miracles within the Bible. However, there are two miracles concerning Jesus that we must closely examine because what we believe about these miracles will determine the foundation of our faith. Both the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection show us that God has the power over life and death. When we profess the Gospel, we are professing both of these miracles fully, which can sound a bit strange to non-believers. But despite its strangeness, the message of hope within these miracles should inspire us to share it boldly!

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal*: Help students start thinking about how important the Virgin Birth and Resurrection are to Jesus' 'hero' story.
- *Set-Up*: None needed.

FIRST, explain that today, we are going to begin our time by looking at an important character in modern cinema/books. *Below is a common example, but feel free to come up with your own. Especially if your group has recently watched a movie together!*
Say something like:

- If you have ever seen or read *Hunger Games*, you know that it is a story about Katniss Everdeen- a young girl who is put into a deadly game where teenagers are killed for sport in an attempt to entertain the people of 'the Capitol.' The books and movies follow her through this dystopian society, where she becomes the face of a revolution and a heroine in her own right. But there is something that prompts her to join these games at the beginning. Her younger sister, Primrose, was originally chosen by random draw. To save Prim's life, Katniss volunteered as tribute.

Ask students:

- What might have happened if Primrose wasn't chosen, and it was someone that Katniss didn't know?
 - *Answers*: Katniss probably wouldn't have volunteered and wouldn't have become the symbol of the revolution.

THEN, say something like:

- Sometimes, we might skip over details in a hero's story because we deem them insignificant. But if you take away these crucial moments, the story alters entirely. The same is true of the two miracles that we will discuss today! Without the miracle of the Virgin Birth or Resurrection, we would be absent of a Savior. These two miracles are a crucial part of Jesus' story, and our faith depends on them happening exactly the way they are depicted in Scripture.

FINALLY, if there are no questions, transition into the Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal*: Examine the importance of these two specific miracles, even though their significance can be difficult to understand.
- *Set-Up*: Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App. Also, make sure you have a dry-erase board and marker.

FIRST, explain to students that we are going to begin our unit on Difficult New Testament Passages. The goal of these lessons is to help them navigate passages that have often been misunderstood, misrepresented, or even just flat-out ignored!

THEN, say something like:

- A building can not stand without its foundation. Today, we are going to look at two incredibly important miracles that are foundational to our faith: The Virgin Birth and Resurrection. Think about this: If Jesus was not born in the exact miraculous way that the prophets said, then we would have to ask if He was the promised Messiah at all. Apart from fulfilling the prophecy, He could have just as easily been some crazy guy who believed He was God! The same is true of the Resurrection. If it never happened, we wouldn't proclaim to the world that the promised Messiah, the perfect and sinless Son of God, had defeated death just as God promised in the Old Testament. If we don't know what we believe about these miraculous events, then we will quickly find ourselves on a shaky foundation.

Ask:

- **Let's begin with the miracle of the Virgin Birth of Christ. Have any of you ever heard someone question the validity of this miracle? Or maybe even had doubts or questions about it yourself?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

NEXT, explain that there are a lot of thoughts out there about how 'valid' the Virgin Birth is. *Leaders, you know your students best. Especially if you have younger students, they might not all understand what a virgin birth is. Invite your students to have maturity while you briefly help everyone in the room understand.* The best way to explain to an extra younger crowd is that every person on earth was born with a mother and a father. These two may not be a part of their life long term, but each is necessary for a baby to be born. The virgin birth promised in the Old Testament tells us that Jesus will have an earthly mother (Mary), but unlike everyone else, He would not have an earthly father. His Father would be God alone.

Say something like:

- **It is no surprise that people didn't and still don't believe Mary's story as it's shared in the Bible. After all, when you understand where babies come from, you know that everyone is born with DNA from two people- even if those two people are not a part of our lives. When Mary tells everyone that she is pregnant but that there is no biological father of her child, this is a very serious claim. Many would assume she was lying because apart from a miracle from God, having a baby without a father was impossible! A young woman in this culture who was found to be pregnant while unmarried would have caused a scandal and, according to the Jewish law at that time, would have been subject to being stoned to death.**

Read or have a student read Matthew 1:18-25.

Say something like:

- **Jesus' birth is supernatural and beyond our understanding. We won't get hung up on the anatomy and physiology of this today, but I want you to see the bigger picture of why this miracle matters and how it reveals God's absolute power over life and how things that are impossible with man are possible with God.**

THEN, write the question, "Can we really believe in the Virgin Birth?" on the dry-erase board. Explain that this question is asked by both believers and non-believers. If Mary is telling the truth, then we must identify her story as miraculous. And miracles can be difficult to believe. **Say something like:**

- **Before we go any further, let's take a moment and define what a miracle actually is. A miracle is defined as "a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency." Have you ever noticed that we don't spend time arguing over some of the other miracles in the Bible, such as the feeding of the five thousand or when Jesus healed the blind man? These things seem just as unlikely as a virgin birth or a resurrection, but somehow, humanity seems less bothered to admit they were possible. Consider this, though: If those miracles were not included in Scripture, it would not impact our faith in Jesus' identity as the Messiah (Savior). But if Jesus was not born to a virgin, then He would have fallen short of the very specific qualifications of the Savior that were prophesied in the Old Testament! That makes this miracle foundational to our belief in Jesus being exactly who He said that He is.**

Read or have a student read Isaiah 7:10-14. **Ask students:**

- **In this passage, people are asking God for a sign. Have you ever asked God to give you a sign for something in your life?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- **God's response to Ahaz in Isaiah is pretty comical when you think about it. Imagine asking God for a sign**

that you've met the person you are going to marry and Him responding, "When you see a purple horse running across a field, you'll know." You would be floored and probably a little bewildered. You might hope that it's just a metaphor because then it would seem more likely to happen. Or, if you were super ambitious, you might start painting horses purple and chasing them around until they started running. Because common sense tells you that seeing a purple horse running in a field on its own is impossible. But nothing, no matter how unlikely or improbable, is impossible with God.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 1:26-37.

Say something like:

- When Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she would carry the Son of God in her womb, even she herself didn't understand how this could be. It doesn't make biological sense. But she did understand the angel's words. Nothing is impossible with God. It seems a little crazy to the outside world that we would believe Jesus was born in this manner. But believing in a miraculous virgin birth not only testifies to the world that we believe Scripture is true, it tells the world that God has the power to make the impossible happen!

Underneath your question, "Can we really believe in the Virgin Birth?" write "Yes!"

Say something like:

- The Virgin Birth is a foundational piece of our faith. As we've said, it distinguishes Him from all the other people out there claiming to be God, because His unique and miraculous birth could have only been made possible by God. On the board, I'm going to write down one key reason that this miracle is so important to what we believe about Jesus.

Read or have a student read Galatians 4:4-7. **Say something like:**

- The first key reason for believing in the Virgin Birth is that when we proclaim that Jesus was born of a human woman, Mary, but not of a human man, we are proclaiming that He was born under the law but not under the curse. Now, there are a lot of passages that can help us understand this better, but I'm going to simplify this for the sake of our lesson today. The Law or Torah, which refers to those first five books in the Old Testament, was given to God's people so that they would be able to identify sin, repent from it, and follow God. As Paul says in Galatians 4, all of us are born under this Law, even Jesus since He is fully human. However, since Jesus was not born of 'man' also, the curse of sin did not pass to Him as it does to the rest of humanity. He was actually able to keep the Law perfectly, something that no other person could ever do.

Read or have a student read 1 Peter 1:18-19. **Say something like:**

- Notice two things in this passage. First, Peter mentions that all we can be offered by our forefathers is perishable or not good enough. Peter is hinting at the spread of that sinful nature through our forefathers or fathers. But Jesus did not have an earthly father! And because of this, He is referred to as precious, like a spotless lamb.

Underneath "Can we really believe in the Virgin Birth?" write on the board, "Jesus was born under the law, but not under the curse. He is the only perfect sacrifice capable of saving humanity!" Then **say something like:**

- Apart from a miraculous Virgin Birth, there is no one who is born capable of being that spotless, sinless, perfect sacrifice that humanity needs for their sin. When we proclaim Jesus is the promised Messiah in the Old Testament, we are saying that only He could take our place up on that Cross. And speaking of the Cross... let's talk about the other foundational miracle of our faith. The Resurrection!

Ask students:

- Why do you think people have a hard time believing that Jesus actually rose from the dead?

o Answers will vary. But make sure students acknowledge death is final. Once you go, you don't come back.

THEN, explain to students that by the definition we used earlier (a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency), Jesus' resurrection is a miracle. However, explain to students that not only does a resurrection qualify as an event not explicable by natural or scientific laws, it is also welcome news!! On your dry-erase board, write, "Can we believe in the resurrection of Jesus?" Then **say**:

- **The Gospel is the foundation of our faith. Gospel is a word meaning "Good News." And what does this Good News include? That the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, conquered sin and death so that we can be freed from both.**

Read or have a student read Matthew 28:1-10. Then **ask**:

- **According to the passage, what did the women feel when they found out Jesus had risen from the dead?**
o Answer: Fear and joy.

Explain that even though there was some fear mixed in with their joy, we still see a joyous response. They run to tell others that Jesus was resurrected. And from there, we see a multitude of witnesses to this joyous occasion (Matthew 28:11, 16-20). Explain that the Good News doesn't end with Jesus' resurrection. **Say something like**:

- **Paul does a really good job of telling us what Jesus' resurrection means for us. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul explains to the church in Corinth that the resurrection of Jesus is a fulfillment of Scripture. That's right—just like the Virgin Birth, this miracle was talked about long before it happened. That's because, as we will read in just a moment, God has had a wonderful plan to bring all of His people into a new, eternal home. But to do so, we must be given life after death.**

NEXT, read or have a student read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. Then, **say something like**:

- **The last enemy to be destroyed will be death. Jesus has already defeated death, but He is looking to destroy it for our sake.**

Underneath the question, "Can we believe in the resurrection of Jesus?" write "Yes!" Explain that it is crucial that we believe in the miracle of the resurrection because, without it, we have no hope of eternal life with Christ. **Say something like**:

- **In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul tells us that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our faith is futile, and we are still left in our sins. If you look at what I wrote under our question about the Virgin Birth, you can see that Christ was born under the law but not under the curse. We are born under the law AND under the curse. When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was more than simply a display of God's power... although it was certainly a grand display! But for us who are born under the curse and 'left in our sins,' the resurrection of Jesus means that the curse has been broken!**

THEN, write, "The Resurrection of Jesus means that the curse of sin has been broken" underneath "Can we believe in the resurrection?" **Say something like**:

- **Remember the definition of a miracle? It's a welcome, surprising event. When it comes to the Resurrection of Jesus, what is more welcome and surprising for a cursed human race than hearing that this curse of death has been broken for all?!**

FINALLY, remind students of their Anchor Statement for this lesson:

**BELIEF IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.
ALTHOUGH EQUALLY IMPOSSIBLE, WE PROCLAIM THAT GOD HAS MADE THEM POSSIBLE!**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the Last Word portion of your lesson.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* Drive home the importance of both miracles in relation to our faith.
- *Set-Up:* A dry-erase board and marker.

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to give them an opportunity to reflect on why it should really matter to them that God holds the miraculous powers of life and death. **Say something like:**

- **Before you came in today, you may not have even realized the importance of the Virgin Birth or Jesus' resurrection. Both the miracle of Jesus' birth and His resurrection from death are true. They were not a trick or technicality. They matter. Let's take a step back and look at it from another angle.**

THEN, display the names, birthdays, and death days of famous people your students would know in the same way you would find on a tombstone. Here are a few to get you started:

- Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865
- Amelia Earhart, 1897-1937
- Rosa Parks, 1913-2005
- Neil Armstrong, 1930-2012
- Elvis Presley, 1935-1977
- Tina Turner, 1939-2023

NEXT, **say something like:**

- **Look at this list of people. Think about what you know about their lives and their accomplishments; imagine all their hopes, fears, and victories that lie between the day they were born and the day they died. When we die, our birthday and death date are put on our tombstone, like we have listed here for these people. But when you have given your life to Jesus, you know that whatever year is listed as the 'death date' is just temporary.**

Read or have a student read John 11:25-26. **Say something like:**

- **The miracle of the Virgin Birth and resurrection tell us two really important things about God. He has the power to defeat death and the power to give life. These miracles are difficult for the outside world to fathom, but as believers, we know that our belief in these two miracles are vital to our faith.**

FINALLY, if there are no more questions, close the lesson in prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.